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fact, though Christianity was not forbidden by the state, Christians were frequently punished, from the time of Nero on, because they were Christians. The possibility of such an apparently anomalous state of affairs lay in the fact that the Roman governors were charged with a large measure of administrative discretion and were empowered to proceed sharply against any who seemed to menace the public safety, even though they might be guilty of no violation of the statutes of the empire. It was apparently during the reign of Nero that the Christians came to be generally regarded as possessing that *odium generis humani* of which Tacitus speaks, and from that time on any governor might arrest and punish them at any time if he found them creating disturbances or believed that they were threatening the public welfare, even though they were guilty of no specific crimes, and this is what many governors did, among them the younger Pliny in Bithynia. Professor Conrat's failure to give due recognition to this aspect of the case has resulted in what seems to us a very serious misinterpretation of Rome's treatment of the early Christians.

A. C. MCGIFFERT.

*Petrarch, the First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters. A Selection from his Correspondence, designed to illustrate the Beginnings of the Renaissance.* Translated from the original Latin, together with Historical Introductions and Notes. By JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON, Professor of History in Columbia University, with the collaboration of HENRY WINCHESTER ROLFE, sometime Professor of Latin in Swarthmore College. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1898. Pp. x, 436.)

THIS book will be gratefully received, not only by the lovers of the Renaissance, but also by that larger public which through all the changes of modern education has, from either loyalty or conviction, retained an affection for the old-fashioned humanistic ideals. The particular problem which the authors set themselves was the presentation of the character of that man, Petrarch, who led the fight for the rehabilitation, among the cramped society of the Middle Ages, of the liberating philosophy of the ancients. The method which they felicitously adopted in place of the usual tedious exposition was, to yield the floor, as it were, to Petrarch himself, by binding together in the frame of an able and lively commentary selected letters of the immense correspondence in which the great scholar has depicted himself, his aspirations, his environment, and his friends. A rapid glance suffices to master the arrangement of the material. An introduction of fifty-seven pages acquaints us with the man and the time; then follow the letters themselves ordered in divisions or rubrics calculated to bring out the significant features of Petrarch's life. These rubrics are as follows: I. Biographical, II. Petrarch and his Literary Contemporaries, III. The Father of Humanism, IV. Travels, V. Political Opinions: Rienzi and Charles IV., VI. The Conflict of Monastic and Secular Ideals, VII. Finale. This general plan will readily

commend itself for its breadth and its clearness ; nothing essential is left out, nothing obscured. As regards the details of the plan, however, one improvement might be introduced which would render a service quite out of proportion to the trouble it would take. As the case is, the reader can get information concerning the date, place, and correspondent only by a somewhat tedious see-saw among foot-notes, introductions, and epilogues, and he can discover the argument of a particular letter only by reading the whole of it. Certainly the authors would have indulged a legitimate desire for convenience, if they had prefaced every letter by a paragraph in small print, in which they furnished the desired information in a few compact sentences. Every letter would thus have been enveloped in its proper atmosphere through which one could have penetrated swiftly and commodiously into the heart of the document.

The authors of the book make no pretension to new facts, their task being, after the arrangement of the material had been once decided, the business of selecting, editing and translating. And this business, very largely one of tact and form, they have managed quite as satisfactorily as the general plan. Each division of the work, and each letter of each division, is set against just the amount of background requisite for the effectiveness of the contents, and of these carefully staged backgrounds, scholarship, precision and artistic measure are conspicuous characteristics. However, two sources of irritation, the one less, the other more important, may be noted. Regarding the unimportant stricture, the authors occasionally indulge in repetitions, which they would presumably beg to have excused on the ground of clearness. The other matter, although it is only a stylistic vice, is more serious, since it involves the intelligibility and forcefulness of the whole argument. Throughout the longer excursions, and therefore particularly in the first Introduction, no effort is made to bind the various and often disparate information together by means of gradual transitions from paragraph to paragraph, and the consequence is that there is produced a wholly unnecessary effect of confusion, involving a suspicion of the capacity of the authors for development and climax. The Englished letters, which form of course the bulk of the volume, seem to satisfy admirably the demands of a good translation : they give not only the facts, but also the very style of dress in which Petrarch sent his facts out into the world. Certainly the easy, rippling, and—it must be confessed—occasionally long-winded period of the translations, in which force is persistently sacrificed to rhythmic swing and elegance, is modeled with sensitive precision upon the sentence-form of that writer who passionately strove to recover a fluent and suave latinity. Whether we are attracted or repelled by the style of these translations, they contain a great deal of the specific quality of the old humanist.

And finally, to turn from the details to the whole. The book is, considering its size, astonishingly full of information, and information, too, that never hobbles on crutches. The Middle Age therein becomes vital and intelligible ; and above all, the figure of Petrarch gradually detaches itself from the pages with an actuality and an intimacy that commends him

to our affections. Of course, there are sides of Petrarch that are deliberately slighted. Petrarch the poet, for instance, has no place in this volume; it is dedicated to the study of Petrarch the thinker and Petrarch the humanist. And this Petrarch will be found utterly worth while, undoubtedly one of the world's great leaders, who inspires our admiration when he makes his excursions into the uncertain realms of the intellect, and who claims our pity and tenderness when he falls victim to the medieval prejudices in his blood. It is interesting to observe how, much as in the case of the great intellectual pioneer of our own century, Goethe, the habits of scholarship gradually extinguished in him the fire of poetic invention, and it is delightful to note how in other respects, too, especially in his calm wisdom and perfect balance, he resembles, not so much Erasmus and Voltaire, to whom he is usually likened, as the great thinker of Weimar. Indeed, the circumstance that the author of the passionate *Canzoniere* is also the parent of the learned Latin epic *Africa*, seems to throw some light on the famous riddle presented in the fact that the poet of the First Part of Faust is also the author of Part Second.

On the cover of the book appears a sketch of Vaucluse by Petrarch's hand—a most pleasant trifle, and really far more expressive than most of the landscape work of the fourteenth century. On page 87 Giotto is probably a slip for Simone Martini. The book is admirably free from careless mistakes.

FERDINAND SCHWILL.

*Drake and the Tudor Navy*, with a History of the Rise of England as a Maritime Power. By JULIAN S. CORBETT. (London, New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co. 1898. Two vols., pp. xvi, 436; viii, 488.)<sup>1</sup>

THIS book is, as its title suggests, not merely a biography of a sailor, who was, in the author's opinion, the foremost of the men who determined the direction and extent of a movement which made England a "controlling force in the European system by virtue of her power over the sea;" it is meant to be rather a history of the movement with Drake as the central figure—Drake, sea-rover, statesman, admiral, the "perfecter," Mr. Corbett claims, "of a rational system of sailing tactics," the "father of a sound system of strategy," the "first and unsurpassed master of that amphibious warfare which has built up the British Empire." In a word it is a lavish contribution to the history of the English navy based on wide reading of original and other sources, and illuminated throughout by brilliant constructive thinking.

As Mr. Corbett paints Drake's portrait upon the rich middle distance of Elizabethan maritime endeavor, so the history of Elizabeth's navy is in turn shown against a still broader background in the introductory essay on the naval art in the middle of the sixteenth century. It would perhaps be

<sup>1</sup> The following remarks apply to the first edition, possibly not always to a new edition which may have appeared before the present review.